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TAGS: PGOV PREL IV  
SUBJECT: SORO PRESIDES OVER GOV'T SEMINAR OUTLINING  
IMPLEMENTATION OF OUAGA ACCORD

Classified By: EconChief EMassinga, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶11. (SBU) Summary. On May 2nd, following a week-long "pre-seminar" dominated by technocrats, new Prime Minister Guillaume Soro presided over a "governmental seminar in Yamoussoukro to define the way forward regarding each of the elements laid out in the Ouaga Accord of March 4. This included identifying the actions required, who would carry them out, and possible sources of funding. The main decisions related to identification and elections preparations. The seminar represents a positive step forward in the peace process. End Summary.

¶12. (SBU) In addition to governmental participants, there were numerous international observers, including a delegation from Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore, broker and guarantor of the Ouaga Accord. The Prime Minister received good reviews for his performance and was able to smooth over some contentious, discordant points remaining from the pre-seminar.

¶13. (C) The seminar took place in the middle of a week dominated by open squabbling between the unarmed opposition coalition RHDP and the Forces Nouvelles, now firmly in control of the Prime Minister's Office (having removed the last of Banny's key advisors). RHDP heads Ouattara and Bedie openly criticized the Prime Minister's camp for failing to adhere to the Ouaga electoral calendar and acquiescing to the President's desire to marginalize the UN's role and eliminate the High Representative for Elections post; however, the more fundamental reason is unhappiness with the PM, namely, the widespread rumors of a "deal" whereby Soro agreed to support the President's reelection in the North in exchange for cash and promises of reciprocal help when Soro becomes eligible for the Presidency himself. These public pronouncements prompted FN spokesman Sidiki Konate and other FN officials to "call the RHDP out," explicitly accusing them of trafficking in the rumor mill and leading many observers to predict an open breach between the FN and RHDP. Soro's smooth delivery of the governmental plan, along with subsequent conciliatory public statements by Konate and others, helped (for now at least) ease many of those fears.

¶14. (C) The seminar addressed a number of points, but the main decisions related to identification and elections. On identification, the audiences foraines will recommence when the prefects are in place, which is scheduled to be completed by May 23. (Note: FN sources indicate they will have authority to name prefects to be deployed in the North, and that the Ministry of Justice, controlled by a FN minister, will play a key role. End Note). The plan also delineates the role of the National Identification Office vis-a-vis the contractor yet to be designated to produce voter ID cards. On the elections process, the plan gives the crucial role of producing the voters' guide to the Independent Electoral

Commission (controlled by a consortium of all parties), vice the National Institute of Statistics which is under the effective control of the Ministry of Interior, now headed by FPI powerhouse Desire Tagro, as had been feared in RHDP circles in recent weeks.

¶5. (C) EmbOff spoke to FN spokesman Konate on May 4 about the seminar, inter alia. The new Tourism Minister was clearly pleased with the outcome of the seminar and his own role, enthusiastically pointing to the detail in which each of the Ouaga points of most interest to the FN are handled (i.e., identification, disarmament and reintegration of militaries and militias and elections). (Comment: despite his claims, the seminar only yielded vague statements of intent vis-a-vis integration of the military. End Comment.) Konate dismissed talk of a private accord between Soro and Gbagbo (although he did not deny it outright) and averred that the FN and Soro maintain ample power and leverage (through the Accord, Compaore's role and, implicitly, the 20,000 men still under arms) to ensure genuine application of the Ouaga accord, despite the what he termed superficial imbalances in assignment of governmental portfolios, such as Finance, Interior and Defense all going to the President's party.

¶6. (C) Comment. The results of the seminar, which are due to be ratified by a Council of Government meeting on May 7, are a welcome reprieve from the distractions of the past week, in which the chattering classes were beginning to dismiss the Soro government for wholly having capitulated to the President. The governmental plan of action implementing the Ouaga Accord appears to be yet another positive step forward in the peace process. End Comment.

Valle